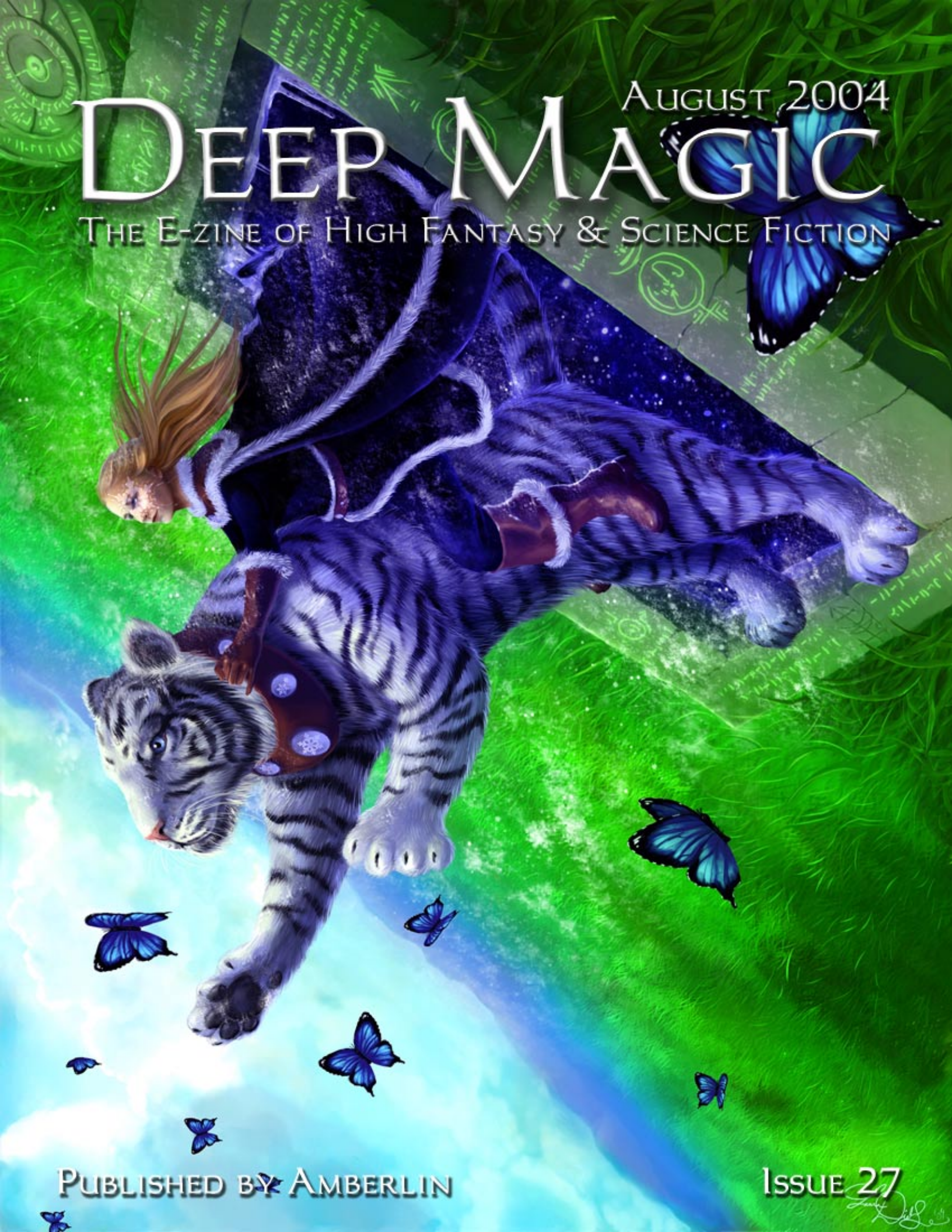
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Cover by Laura Diehl
*"A Leap of Seasons"*

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# August 2004

*The editors of Deep Magic would like to thank all of the generous contributors who have made it possible for us to become a nonprofit corporation. That is right, we are now an offical nonprofit corporation! Since its inception, Deep Magic has been published by The Amberlin Group, LLC. Now our new corporation, Amberlin, Inc., will take over the operation of the e-zine and all publishing efforts. Over the next few months, we will continue the transition, and we will soon dissolve the LLC. We continue to work toward obtaining 501(c)(3) status as a tax exempt entity through the IRS, but we are now officially incorporated. Thank you again for your generosity that has allowed us to continue producing Deep Magic and move to a new and dynamic business model. We look forward to great opportunities and sunny days as a nonprofit corporation.*

Believe it or not, the summer is winding down. Seems like it just started, didn't it? Well, we thought we'd take this month to offer something special to our younger readers who have to go back to school at the end of the month. So August is children's month, and we've included four stories that we think you will enjoy. *One Single Wish* explores the problem of deciding just when to use that one wish. *Lubberkin* offers us an intriguing and fun twist on the Rumplestiltskin tale. For those of you with younger children, be sure to read *Grace-in-the-Green* to them at bedtime. Finally, *Jacob and the Dragon Wyrm* follows a young boy who finds a baby dragon.

In addition to our stories, we offer you two articles to help you with the craft of writing. Chief Editor Jeremy Whitted offers some thoughts on writing in different points of view in his article titled...you guessed it, "Point of View". Published author Sean T. M. Stiennon's article "Writing—One Line at a Time" gets down to the basics of how to start your first, or next, story. And did you like our cover this month? If so, be sure to check out an interview with the artist, Laura Diehl. We are also featuring a second artist, Ron Leming. Throw in some quality book reviews and we know you'll be pleased with this month's issue.

August is also the last month to vote for the Lamp Post Awards, which honor the best stories and cover artists from the past year. If you don't remember what stories to choose from, or you want to go back and read them again, you can find the selections on our website.

Our writing challenge this month gets back to a favorite topic...our covers. Once again we're asking for pieces inspired by Deep Magic covers. So check out the details on page five.

We are excited about the near future of Deep Magic. We're hoping to get a second anthology out this year, as well as another fantasy novel in print. Our online submissions system is nearly done (in fact, as you'll see on page five, our writing challenge selections have officially moved to that system)—you authors will love it. More and more quality submissions have been coming in to us as well. All in all, things are going great. We thank you, our readers, once again for your support. Enjoy the August issue.

All the best,
The Editors

**Safe Places for Minds to Wander**

It's hard to believe it's that time of year again, but sure enough, we're ready to begin voting for the Lamp Post Awards. Each year, we ask you, our readers, to vote for your favorite Fantasy short, Science Fiction short, Article, and Cover Art from a list of nominees, chosen from our panel of editors.

We've featured some great stories, articles, and cover artists this past year (our years, by the way, run from June through the following May). It was a tough decision just coming up with the nominees. Choosing the best will be even more difficult. Of course, that's why we're asking for your help. Below you will see a list of the nominees. If you haven't read them all, feel free to download the appropriate issue and read them (next to each nominee is the corresponding issue). You have all summer. Voting will close on August 15, 2004, with the winners to be announced in the September issue.

If you have any questions, feel free to stop by the forums and let us know. We also welcome you to join or start a discussion about the Lamp Post awards while you're there.

## Click Here to Vote!

### Science Fiction Short Stories

Swarm by A.J. Thompson (August 2003)
Cohesion Lost by Darrell Newton (March 2004)
Where Memory Has Lease by Mark Reeder (April 2004)
A Taste of Time by Abby Goldsmith (May 2004)
Our Own Personal Gaia by Alexander R. Brown (June 2003)
The Interstellar Public Health Inspector by Nigel Atkinson (May 2004)

### Fantasy Short Stories

A Hero by Any Other Name by Wade Albert White (January 2004)
A Winter Stew by M. Thomas (October 2003)
Into Pohjola by Scott Clements (October 2003)
Kenatos by Jeff Wheeler (April 2004)
Limbo the Black-Souled by Steve Poling (January 2004)
Spells End by Mark C. Ford (August 2003)
The Archer and the Dove by Bret Ludwig (May 2004)
The Garden of Lost Dreams by Lynn-Marie Braley (November 2003)
The Lost Colony of Arob Arot by A.M. Stickel (November 2003)
The Well That Never Ended by Usman Tanveer Malik (April 2004)

### Covers

August by Jeff Bedrick (August 2003)
Bitter Chivalry by Todd Lockwood (December 2003)
Evening Duty by Rob Katkowski (October 2003)
Exiles by Peter Kudriashov (September 2003)
Warrior's Bond by Matthew Stawicki (February 2004)

### Articles

New York Field Trip (1 and 2) by Jeff Wheeler (July 2003/August 2003)
Notes On the Hero by M. Thomas (June 2003)
Peas and Carrots by Brendon Taylor (October 2003)
The Geek In Me by Jeremy Whitted (June 2003)
To Outline, Or Not to Outline? by Kristen Britain (September 2003)
Vocabulary by Cecilia Dart-Thornton (January 2004)

# Writing Challenge

Each month, Deep Magic offers an opportunity and a challenge for our readers who are also writers. Whether you are a novice who has never written a fictional paragraph, or a veteran of the publishing business, you are welcome to participate. These challenges are designed to help you develop your writing talents. As incentive, or by way of warning, we select a small number of submissions each month for publication. ***Keep in mind that our writing challenge pieces are not edited and are usually written by amateur writers.***

We have recently changed how we accept writing challenge submissions. You can now go to our new online submissions system. Create an author profile (you will soon be able to submit short stories through this system as well) and submit a writing challenge from there. We hope you like our new system.

## August 2004 Writing Challenge

We're very proud of the covers we get, and we have the incredibly talented artists to thank. They allow us to use their images, which help to make Deep Magic what it is. It seems we're not the only ones, since challenges that create the most interest are those inspired by covers of Deep Magic issues. Therefore, we thought we'd try it again.

The challenge is simple: pick any 2004 cover (January through August) and write a story or scene inspired by that cover. There are no restrictions as to what you write, as long as it is fantasy or science fiction and you keep it clean. And, of course, under 1000 words. Good luck, and enjoy!

## Selections from the July 2004 Writing Challenge

### So There, Too!

The above stories were selected from the submissions we received this last month. As a refresher, here is the writing challenge from last month:

*This month's challenge builds a bit on the Tall Tale from last month. With our upcoming Children's issue in August, we thought we'd gather a round of Fairy Tales for our Kenatos world-building project. Fairy Tales are often simlilar to Tall Tales, but they are usually told to children and typically involve some sort of mythical character (fairy, goblin, elf, etc.). They often tell of princes and princesses, usually have a happy ending, and are frequently disguised morality tales.*

*So for your challenge, the Kenatos Fairy Tale must include a child, a talking animal, a prince/princess, and/or a mythical creature (such as a goblin, giant, or elf). Bonus points if you can include all four! Keep your submission under 1000 words.*

# So There, Too!

## By A. M. Stickel

Once upon a time, a genie ventured forth from the Fortress of Solitude beyond Boeotia. His name was "Sarnit" in the old tongue, which in ours is "So There, Too!" After flying as far south as he could, he was tired. He decided to visit the park pond in a village of Wayland wearing a princely disguise. The bright silks he wove from light and air matched his happy mood. But it did not last long. Two urchins, whose only toys were rocks, plopped them in the pond just as the genie appeared behind them. Cold, muddy water soaked his colorful clothes and wilted the slippers covering his upturned toes.

"That's not nice!" cried the genie, careful of his clothes, and even more so of his toes. Although he loved water, mixed with earth, water made his magic weak. That was why he had to live in the Fortress, which was made of sand. "Who did this?" roared the genie, shivering and wet. His clothes did not fit his genie form. His toes poked out of his tasseled slippers.

"I-dunno," said the ragged little girl, pointing to her brother.

"Not-me!" said her littler, raggeder brother, pointing to his sister.

The genie did not realize that these were really the children's names. He thought they were being rude.

At first, the boy and girl were afraid that they would have to pay for cleaning the stranger's clothes and slippers. Then, when he began to change, they realized they were in worse trouble, unless they did what the priests of Seitherell had taught them. They knelt at his feet as if to beg his forgiveness, but clutched the genie's toes with muddy hands. He was in their power as long as they held on.

"Give us a wish, and we'll release you," sang the children together. "Take us to your castle, the Fortress of Solitude, and give us gold. We don't want to be poor any more."

"You two can have your wish, but I will do more than give you gold. So there, too!" said the genie, and changed them into goldfish. He flew with them in a crystal bowl of clear water he conjured up. "I've always wanted house pets," he said.

Back home in Solitude, "I-dunno" and "Not-me" swam round and round in their bowl, admiring shiny riches they could not reach.

"Blub! Blub!" they said, which meant they were bored going nowhere in the bowl.

"All that blubbering is keeping me awake," said the genie. "So there, too!" He changed them into two gray-and-white mice, so they could scamper about freely.

"Skitter, skitter" went the tiny mouse feet, as the two ran around looking for cheese and crumbs to eat. But none was to be found among the treasures piled there.

"All that skittering won't let me get my rest," said the genie. "So there, too!" He changed the two mice into two green snakes, so they could slide quietly along.

"Slither, slither" went the snakes, crawling over, under and around the genie's toes. The treasure pile was too cold a resting place.

"That's all I need – two green snakes tickling my toes with their slithering," said the genie. "So there, too! Be peonies in a pot – one red, one blue. Now I can sleep."

The genie finally fell asleep. When he awoke he felt so good that he tucked the peony pot under his arm. He returned to the park whistling a tune and planted the peonies there.

"It's a shame to keep such pretty flowers to myself. I have treasure enough. They belong in this park, and not in Solitude. So there, too!"

* * *

"I agree that those are lovely peonies, but I'd rather have my family back together," said the children's mother. She had been looking for them all this time. "Did you see two ragged children throwing rocks yesterday, Princely One? Oh, boo, hoo, hoo! I miss them. So there, too!"

The genie felt sorry for her. So, as soon as she said his magic name, and her tears touched the peonies, they changed back into children.

"Go home with your mother. You are *her* treasure." said the genie, patting their heads. "You've learned your lesson, and I've learned from you. Leave me in peace to finish my stroll in the park." Before he could say "So there, too!" they ran to their mother. Then all three ran home to celebrate their reunion.

"I-dunno" and "Not-me" told their mother all about their adventures in Solitude as fish and mice and snakes and flowers. She believed them, not only because she'd seen them changed from peonies to children again, but also because the children had finally been taught to always tell the truth. They were quite content. For, although they were poor in the eyes of the world, they were rich in wisdom. So there, too!

# One Single Wish

## By Amy M. Smith

"There is always the stone," Keir said hesitantly after a moment, his gray eyes looking hopefully at the small wooden box that sat, unimpressive, on the shelf over the hearth.

Safira, too, looked at the box but not with the same anticipation as her husband. "No," she said without pause. "We cannot use the stone."

Keir sighed and pulled his eyes from the box and rested them on Safira's resolute face. "It is worth a try," he said. "After all, your grandmother *was* a witch—"

"An enchantress," Safira interjected.

Keir shrugged but did not correct himself. "That little stone just might have some magic in it."

Safira suppressed a sigh. Keir was like that—always looking for a quick answer to their immediate problems. Not that he wasn't a good husband, but a lifetime of poverty had made it difficult for him to see more than a few days—or at most, a few months—into the future. Safira was different. A meticulous nature made her prone to almost obsessive planning, and she had learned from experience that things could always get worse. Eternal pessimism made her hesitant to bemoan a current situation for fear that a worse one would present itself.

**Taking the stone from the trembling hand, Safira had looked at it closely, seeing nothing unusual about it. But she had seen too often the wonders her grandmother had performed to believe she held a common rock.**

Safira looked back to the box. Though she had only opened it once, she knew exactly what lay inside. It had been years ago, not long after she and Keir were married, that she had been called to her grandmother's deathbed. The old woman had said her goodbyes, given her blessing and handed Safira a small, black stone. Taking the stone from the trembling hand, Safira had looked at it closely, seeing nothing unusual about it. But she had seen too often the wonders her grandmother had performed to believe she held a common rock.

Safira had grown up in awe of her grandmother's skill. Never once had she doubted her abilities. And even Keir, with his practicality and skepticism toward magic, had come to admit that the old woman possessed an unexplainable gift. Curious as to what secrets were hidden in the stone, Safira turned back to her grandmother.

"It is a wishstone," the failing woman said in a weak voice. "Whatever you wish for, say it and it will be. But take care—the stone can be used only once. Make your decision wisely."

Safira had promised not to use the stone frivolously, and returning home, she had placed it gingerly in the wooden box and set it over the hearth. And there it had sat, untouched.

Turning back to Keir, Safira shook her head. "I do not mean that we cannot use it ever, but rather that we cannot use it *now*."

Keir sighed and looked at her desperately. "What do you suggest, then?" he asked. "We have no money and the crop will not be good. We cannot pay off our debts, let alone provide for

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# Featured Artist
## Laura Diehl

**Age:** 21
**Residence:** Shenandoah Valley, Virginia
**Marital Status:** Nope
**Children:** None
**Hobbies:** Digital Painting, Fantasy and Science-Fiction Books, RPG Video Games, Traditional Art, Internet
**Personal Quote:** "If a picture is worth a thousand words, why would I want to use anything else to write my stories?"
**Favorite Book or Author:** Terry Goodkind's Sword of Truth series
**Started Painting In:** 1998 (when I got my first digital art pad and computer) before that I didn't really do much in the way of my own art outside of school. Since 1998 I've created a good amount of digital paintings outside of the classroom. I still use the same Calcomp art pad today.
**Artist Most Inspired By:** The Brothers Hildebrandt
**Media You Work In:** Photoshop 7.0 and Painter 7.0
**Schools Attended:** Working on a BFA in General Fine Arts -with an Illustration emphasis. Next fall (2004) I will be a Junior at James Madison University.
**Other Training:** I spend a lot of time looking at other digital artists' work and finding tutorials.
**Where Your Work Has Been Published or Displayed:** Most of my art is on my website and has been displayed at various school art shows. Additionally, two of my pieces will be published in the Writers of the Future: Volume XX, this year.
**Where Someone Can Buy Your Art or Contact You Professionally:** At my website or via email: ArtisticEnigma@aol.com
**Website URL:** www.ArtisticEnigma.com

**Q: How did you come to be an artist?**
A: I guess there is no real starting point. I've always enjoyed drawing and painting things. Ever since I can remember I've loved fantasy

continued on next page

art, both trying to create it and looking at the artwork of others. In high school I took every art class I could and started working on my own fantasy art outside of school -created with a digital art tablet and my computer. Since then I've continued along these lines. I'm not a professional artist yet, though I plan to be after I graduate from college with my Illustration-related degree. I'd like to do fantasy and science-fiction book cover art as well as movie and video game concept art.

**Q: How would you describe your work?**
A: Digital fantasy paintings that are not really realistic nor extremely stylized. Most are a sort of idealized portrayal of the subject and themes I'm tackling. Color is a big part of my work because I use richly saturated, and as of late complementary colors, to bring my images to life.

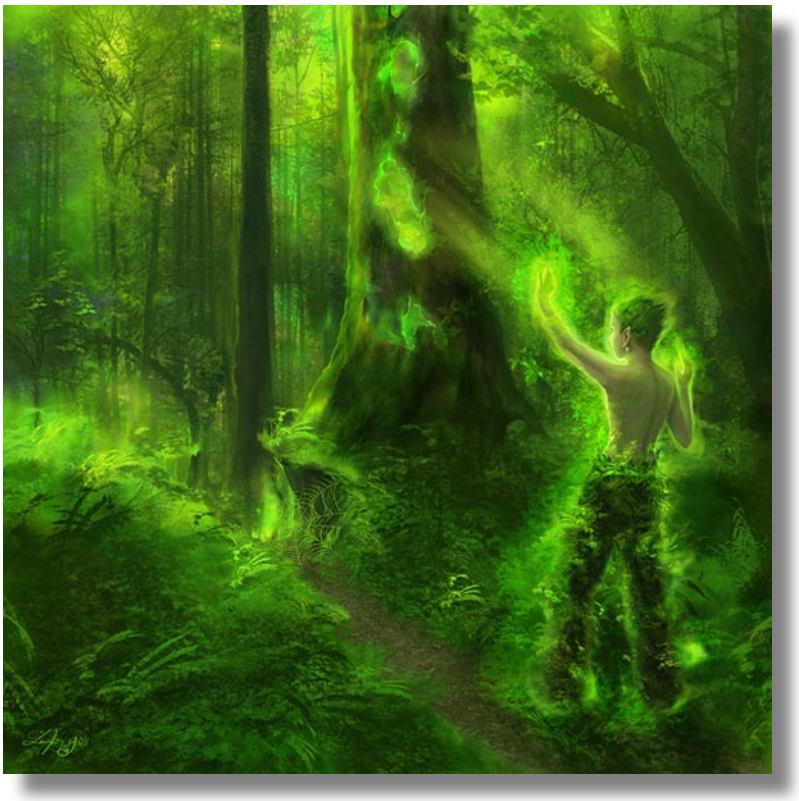
**Q: Where do you find your inspiration?**
A: From a number of areas including books, video games, movies, dreams and the fantasy narratives I create to entertain myself through boring lectures.

**Q: What inspired this piece? (Tell us its story...)**
A: The piece "A Leap of Seasons" was inspired by a world of mine: Snowmist. This world is still one that is under construction and, in a way, this image was the birth of two new character inhabitants. In this image the girl, Aneira, and her tiger, Bronwen, have managed to open up a door that leads from the outer planet (which is always winter) to the inner planet (where, in this case, it is spring). Gravity always pulls them toward the planet wall; which way it pulls depends on which side they're on. So these characters should very shortly be flipped in their gravitational orientation and end up on the grass of the Inside.

**Q: What do you consider your influences?**
A: As far as traditional fantasy illustrators go I would consider The Brothers Hildebrandt, Keith Parkinson, Michael Whelan and John Howe among my top influences. In the area of digital art, my life was forever changed by the works of Craig Mullins, Socar Myles and Linda Bergkvist. And I can't go without mentioning the animation master Hayao Miyazaki, for his movies never cease to influence the way I look at the world.

**Q: What has been your greatest success in your artistic career?**
A: Winning a trip to Hollywood, CA for a week-long illustration workshop and publication in the 20th volume of Writers of the Future for two of my illustrations.

**Q: What trends are you seeing in the Sci-Fi/Fantasy genre?**
A: It just seems to me like it has begun to branch out more and more—that whether it be art, writing or games, this genre is diversifying at a rapid rate. I definitely enjoy the direction it is going in, and I feel that this search for something new is pushing the genre as a whole to new heights.



# Lubberkin

## By Tracey Pennington

I am a leasty lubberkin, a lob-lie-by-the-fire.

No one knows quite where my people come from. Some claim that we are kin to the tallest of the Faerie folk, the leprechauns (how they became transformed into tiny merry cobblers, I could not say), but there is no truth in this, as you would see if you had ever espied one of the Sidhe beside me.

My kind was not so strange to mortals a thousand years ago, or five hundred, or even two hundred. But nowadays few folk remember that lubberkins exist, and that we like a bowl of milk at night, and a kind word now and again praising our spinnings.

For a lubberkin is the luck of the house, and each of us spins the fortune of the owners. I came into being—for lubberkins are not born, not as you mortals know it—in a castle in—well, if I spoke the name, you would know it, but why bother? The castle is dust, and the kingdom conquered. Only I remain.

At first the castle was treasured and cared for, and the castle and its kings thrived, and so did I. But times waxed and waned, and the days of the kingdom changed from rich to poor, and the kings turned hard of heart, and cursed their luck. That is, they cursed me.

**I didn't expect her to see me. Few mortals do. But she heard my step as I crossed the threshold of the locked door, and she looked up and stared into my eyes.**

And what could I do, but endure? For the castle was my home, and the kingdom the home of the castle, and the kings and queens the owners whom I was bound to serve.

Things wore on thus for many turns of seasons (for we of Faerie do not seek to weigh time by the minute or the hour as you do). I grew bonier and weaker, and my pale gold fur developed mats and snarls, becoming dark and dusty. And still no one remembered me.

Then one day, an informant came to the castle and told the king that he had heard a miller in a small town boasting—in his cups, more than likely—that he had a fair daughter who could spin straw into gold.

The king, I think, must have been bored with couriers and courtesans and collectors of taxes, for he told the informant that he would go and visit this miller in disguise. And so he did. Well, he called it disguise. A newborn babe could have seen through it, for what hard-working peasant garbs himself in clean, soft brown linen, a well-cut plunket blue cape lined with saffron silk, and black leather boots?

Whether the miller was merely too frightened to lie to this obviously wealthy and powerful stranger, or cared not who the king was so long as he was paying for yet another draught of beer, I do not know; I was not there. I do know that the king came back alone, enormously pleased with himself, and a few days later, so did the miller's daughter, bound and under guard. I know this, for I found her later that evening in a room filled from ceiling to floor with straw, rubbing the rope burns on her wrists and crying.

I didn't expect her to see me. Few mortals do. But she heard my step as I crossed the

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# Point of View
## By Jeremy Whitted

So you have the next great fantasy novel in your head. Maybe scratched out in a quick outline. The characters are set. You've hammered out the plot. Now you're ready to go. So…how do you plan on telling it? By that I mean, what will be the point of view for the narrator?

You see, every story has a narrator. Maybe it's the main character. Maybe it's one of the minor characters. Or maybe you want a third-person narration, as is most common. It's an important decision, because your choice of narrator determines what you get to tell the reader and, quite possibly, how well the reader will understand and enjoy your story. With all this in mind, perhaps we should look at the advantages and pitfalls of the various points of view. I'll talk about the following points of view:

> *First Person* - The narrator tells the story from his/her point of view (using 'I' and 'me').
> *Second Person* - You, the reader, are the main character of the story, told from your view.
> *Third Person* (omniscient and limited) - The writer uses one or more characters to tell the story from their point of view (using pronouns like 'he' and 'his').

**First Person**

This is a fun point of view. Done well, it makes for an enjoyable story. Done poorly…well, it doesn't. The main character of your story is doing the talking here, so you have a freedom that can't be had in third person. I'm mainly referring to style and speech patterns. A first person narrator can use slang and casual speech that would be awkward in third person. Not only that, but descriptions can (and probably should) be freely colored with opinion, good or bad. Let's try a couple examples of how first person can be a benefit. (And please excuse the horrendous writing here.)

> *I opened the tavern door and was greeted with a smell that I could only describe as death with a side of dung. That I saw people sitting at their tables eating made me want to put the miserable souls out of their misery. And the stench didn't stop with the food, as I discovered when the barmaid approached me, her toothless grin outdone only by the reek that was her breath. I'd heard the term dragon breath before, but I don't think that's being fair to the dragons.*

So let's see how this could be written in third person:

> *Tilman opened the tavern door and stepped in, only to be greeted with a foul odor worse than death itself. The Finder wrinkled his nose in distaste and stared at the patrons, completely baffled as to how they could eat food that smelled so horrible. Tilman discovered, however, that the stench didn't stop with the food. As the barmaid approached, he was greeted with a toothless grin and breath worse than any dragon he had met.*

So I don't know if those are fair examples, but you can get a sense of the difference between first and third person. First person allows for a more personal description of a scene. Assuming that's what you're going for. It's also much easier to get into the mind of the narrator, because he's the one describing everything to you. However, this leads to one of the main pitfalls of first person. Example:

> *I turned from the bar as the stranger entered. Let me say, he was one good-looking hunk of meat. He should be so lucky as to have someone like me to keep him company. I set down the rag, smoothed my apron and went over to him, my hips swaying rhythmically to the music being played in the corner. I made sure he would see my luscious lips and ample breasts as soon as he laid eyes on me. Hopefully he won't notice that I don't have many teeth…*

There are many things wrong with the above paragraph (not the least of which is the atrocious writing). How many people would describe their own lips as luscious or their breasts as ample? Would they mention their hips swaying rhythmically? I suppose it's all possible, depending on your character, but in general, it's a sign of a sloppy writer. When your first person narrator is talking about herself, be careful what she says and how she says it. Think about how you would describe yourself casually and use that as a starting point. Don't have your narrator talk about her 'silky, golden mane of hair flowing down her back.' (Come to think of it, I wouldn't suggest using that line in third person, either.) And if your narrator is a man, he probably wouldn't mention his 'bulging biceps, barely contained underneath the tight tunic.'

Along those lines, watch out for how your narrator describes other people. It all depends on who the narrator is and what they're like, however, so it's hard to give set rules for it. But if the character telling your story is a battle-hardened man who lived his life as a soldier, he probably wouldn't describe a beautiful woman as having 'beautiful green eyes, so soft and gentle that I could lose myself for days just staring into them.' You get the picture. Know your narrator, know how she sees herself, other people and the world around her, and describe it like that.

Another downside to writing in first person is that you are limited to that person's point of view. You won't be able to switch scenes to Evil Overlord Steven sitting on the Bone Throne in the Kingdom of Nogero as he meditates a new evil ploy to rule the world.

**Third Person Omniscient**

Third person omniscient is perhaps the easiest to write. Yet it can be the most risky. Why? Because it's too easy to bore your reader to tears. The advantage with first person and third person limited is that you can really attach the reader to your main character. When you know their thoughts, emotions, and internal struggles, it's easier to identify with them. While third person omniscient doesn't prevent you from getting the reader inside a character's head, you can't spend too much time there, because there are other characters to worry about.

The pitfalls with third person omniscient are few, which is why many people prefer to use it. Most everything is fair game. You can tell the reader things your characters don't know. You can tell your reader what one or another of your characters is thinking. This is the God view. The narrator knows all and can tell the reader all. But along those lines (completely opposite, actually), let's talk about one of my major annoyances with this point of view: lying to your

reader.

Have you ever read a book or watched a movie and discovered at the end that you've been lied to all along? They call this a twist. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. In books, it doesn't work for me when the story is written in third person omniscient. Why? Because the narrator knows everything and the only way to get a twist at the end is to lie to your reader. If you want a twist, use third person limited. That way, the narrator experiences the twist when the reader does. You don't have to lie to the reader, you just have to keep your main character out of the loop. Which is easy. For good movie examples, look at The Sixth Sense and The Others. The twists work because the movies are told in a limited point of view, not omniscient.

Another common problem with this point of view is when the author hops around different characters' heads in the same scene. One scene needs to take place from one character's point of view. Otherwise, it becomes hard to tell which character the author is talking about.

**Third Person Limited**

Third person limited (one of several names I've seen for this point of view) is a mix between third person omniscient and first person. Basically, the narrator is not a character in the story, but it follows one character the whole time. This is harder than it sounds. The advantage is that you can still distance the reader from the story and give detail the character himself would miss, yet you can also get a little inside that character's head.

> *Cassandra turned to the front door as the stranger stepped in, a smile creeping onto her face. She looked at him up and down, whistling softly to herself. Her misplaced confidence overcame her as she placed her dish rag on the bar and smoothed out her apron. This stranger was about to meet the woman of his life. Cassandra began the walk to the front door, her hips swaying to the music and her supple breasts showing through the low-cut bodice. She knew no man could resist her, not with lips like hers. He turned to her as she reached him. She smiled and winked, waiting for him to take her off to the corner. He appeared about to speak when he turned to the door and vomited all over the floor. Strange, she thought. He must be feeling ill.*

With third person limited, the reader will always know more about the main character than anyone else, and your descriptions need to conform. You want to be sure that in your description, nothing about what other characters are thinking is mentioned. You can get around that sometimes. The main character may not know what they're thinking, but they can know what it looks like they're thinking. A furrowed brow, a half-smile, rolled eyes—all can be used to help that main character get a feeling for what those around are thinking. Third person limited does give you the freedom to explore other characters and get into their skulls, but not mid-stream and certainly not mid-paragraph.

There is a trick you can use the get the reader familiar with multiple characters. You can split your story. Think of The Lord of the Rings. For much of the books, there are several different stories, and we go back and forth between them. So, for instance, Tolkien could do third person limited by getting us into Frodo's head for that part of the story, then telling it through Aragorn for another part, and maybe Pippin for yet a third part. Now when some or all of those characters are together, he would have to leave some as background characters and tell the story through just one of them, but it can still work. Many authors use that technique.

One final pitfall of third person limited is when you tell something through your character that the character shouldn't know. If your character is hiking up the hill, sword slung on his back, he's not going to know about the goblin ambush behind the boulder up ahead. He won't know until it happens, so you can't tip the reader off to it, either. That's where this point of view limits you. With third person omniscient, you can tell the reader about the ambush, then go back to the unaware hero. More tension can be built up that way. On the other hand, surprise can be used to great effect when the reader doesn't find out about the ambush until it happens. So be sure not to tell things the character wouldn't know, and try using that limitation to your advantage whenever possible.

**Second person**

I wanted to leave this out, but I know someone would mention it. I don't like second person, plain and simple. The only time I've ever seen it work is with the Choose Your Own Adventure books, which, when I was ten, were great. Basically, second person is when the narrator is talking directly to the reader, who is the main character. "You enter the tavern and are immediately assaulted with a fouled stench. 'What is that odor?' you think to yourself…"

Just doesn't work for me. I've been told there are a few stories written in the second person that work, but I'm skeptical. I don't like words being put in my mouth, or being forced to make a decision I think is stupid (which is maybe why the Choose Your Own Adventure books work for me).

So confident am I in my distaste for this point of view that I'll issue a challenge. If anyone can write a second person scene or story of between 750 and 1500 words, and I like it, I'll publish it in Deep Magic. I'll put it inside an article if I have to, but I'll do it. And, I promise, I'll be honest about whether I like it or not. Deal?

That's it for me. There is another topic I wanted to discuss here, but I tire. So another day, I'll discuss the 'tense' issue (past tense vs present tense and how they work with the different points of view). Until then, I hope this was at least moderately useful to you. And who knows… maybe I'll finish that story about Tilman the Finder and Cassandra the foul-breathed barmaid.

# The End

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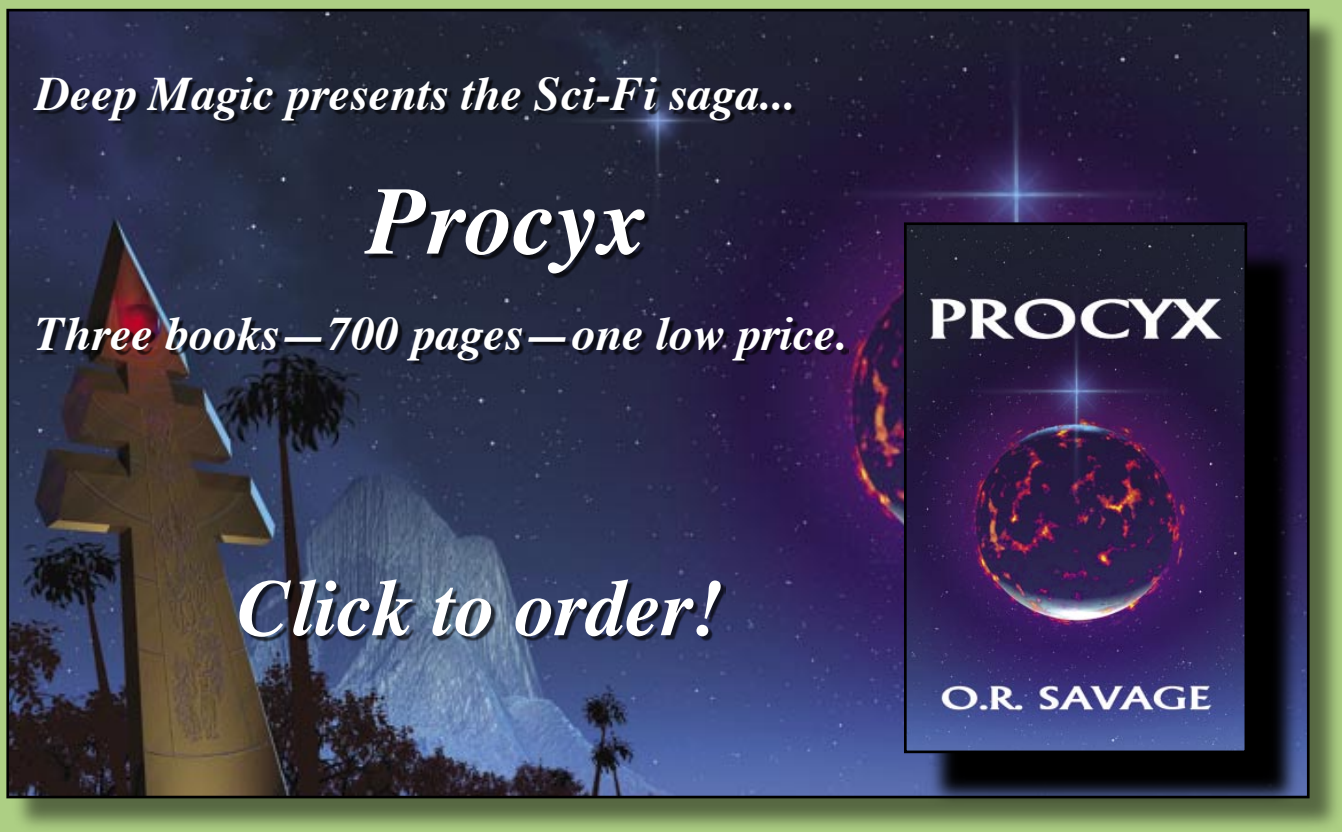


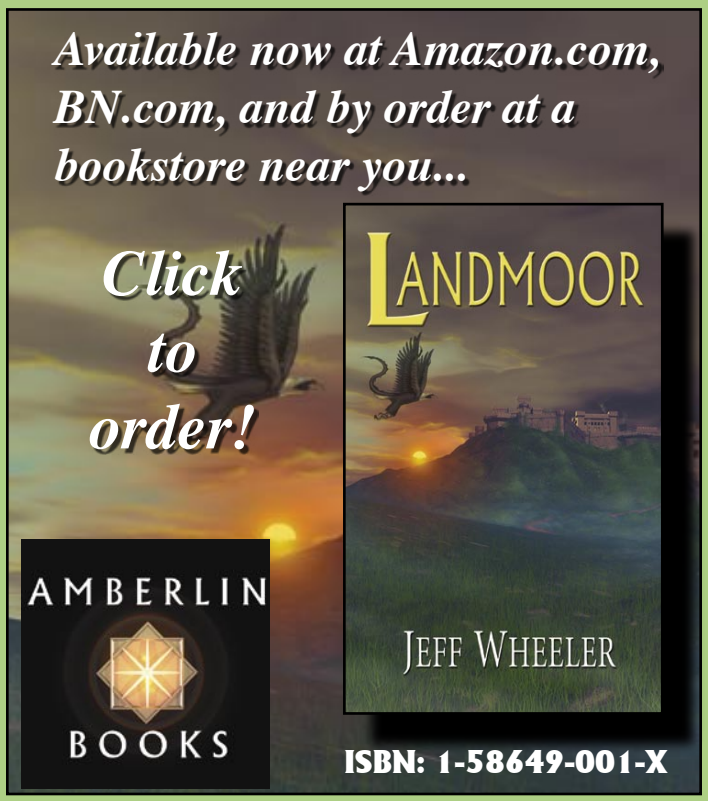

Deeper Magic - A collection of short stories from the first year of Deep Magic.
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# Grace-in-the-Green

## By A.M. Stickel

'Clip, clop' went Old Ned's tired hooves on the road, far from home, with a heavy market load. The sound echoed in the magic wood, and woke Grace, the Frog Queen, from her nap.

Farmer Jones spoke sadly to his weary horse. "Times are hard and hungry. Even our dogs and cats must be sold."

Watching in the enchanted waters of her pond, Grace saw Rascal, the runt pup, and Spitfire, a scrap of a kitten, escape from their baskets on the back of the wagon. She saw them jump off to bolt for freedom, as Farmer Jones called, "Spitty! Rascal! You come back here! Ungrateful animals!" He was too slow for them. They were gone in a heartbeat.

Down the road and into the trees raced Spitfire, a black streak, followed by the pale blur that was Rascal. They crossed over a log bridging a stream and into a strange forest. 'Plip! Plop!' It suddenly began to rain. 'Growl' went their tummies. They were lost.

Soon thirsty, Spitfire and Rascal stopped to drink from Poem Pond. But they jumped back quickly. Sitting on a large rock in the middle of the pond was a great green frog.

"Pitter! Patter! Doesn't rain feel good? What brings you here to Rhyming Wood?" croaked the frog.

The puppy and kitten did not like the rain, and they had never seen a frog. They huddled together on the cold, wet ground, shivered, and stared.

The frog croaked again. "I can see I have no choice. I must give you both a voice." She jumped off the rock, swam over to them, and splashed them with magic pond water.

**The frog croaked again. "I can see I have no choice. I must give you both a voice." She jumped off the rock, swam over to them, and splashed them with magic pond water.**

"Skitter! Scatter! We don't mean to intrude," began Spitfire in her whiney new voice, as she tried to lick the magic water off. Her black fur was plastered flat, making her gray eyes look huge.

"We're here to find a home and food," finished Rascal in his scratchy new voice. His soggy tail sagged, and his wet ears drooped in his eyes.

"My name," croaked the Frog Queen "is Grace-in-the-Green. And you're the scrawniest two I've ever seen." Slowly, she blinked her golden eyes at them.

Rascal answered politely. "We're just Spitty-scrap-kitty and Rascal-runt-dog. Please lead us to a dry place, like under a log." He sat up and begged with big brown eyes.

Grace, feeling sorry for them, said, "Quick now, you youngsters, follow me. I know of a spot under a tree. There you'll be cozy, warm, and dry. Ki-Yi Coyote's coming by. He's very good at finding food. We friends all share in Rhyming Wood."

When they got there, a shy furry face peeked at them from behind their tree. Grace introduced them to another new friend. "This is Scamper, a baby squirrel. Like you, Spitty, she's a girl." Flicking her bushy brown tail, Scamper came out and touched noses in greeting with Spitfire and Rascal.

Scamper chattered, "Look out! Here comes Bouncer Bunny. When he hops, he is so

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# Artist Profile
## Ron Leming

Ron is an accomplished author whose works include The Gutbucket Quest, a novel co-written by Piers Anthony. His artwork graces the covers of numerous books. See his website for complete biographical information and art samples.

Website: http://www.bonestructure.net/

# Writing–One Line at a Time

## By Sean T. M. Stiennon

Have you ever wanted to write, but never gotten around to it? Perhaps you think that your ideas need time to develop, that you don't have the time, or that your ideas are great, but you need to read plenty of books and attend a few workshops before you could even consider sitting down at the keyboard. Maybe you're just lazy. (Yes, you! In the third row!) Work, family, and other hobbies suck up all your time, and if you have a few minutes after everything else is done, it's not enough to do any writing, and you're too tired then anyway.

Nonsense! All you need is a minute. Yes, one minute, with your computer and a word processor powered up. Do it now. Yes, now. Not when you're done reading this article.

Done? All right. Place your fingers over the keyboard. Can't touch-type? Not to worry, the keys are marked. Next, write out one line of fiction. C'mon. It doesn't matter if it's terrible. It doesn't matter if it sounds like: "Gordon Gargravarr sat down and drank some coffee slowly. It was hot. Gargravarr growled grumblingly, 'I do not like this coffee!' Then the aliens came with psycho mindbeams and..."

That's more than a line, if you've noticed. Now, set that aside for a moment, and write on a sheet of paper or in a separate file: "Nulla dia sine linea." Make sure you use nice big letters, and feel free to use English: "Never a day without a line." Emile Zola kept this inscribed above his fireplace.

In order to launch your writing career, just follow that. The bestsellers and talk-show appearances will come in good time, but not if you don't follow that mandate. Print it out and tape it near your computer. Make copies for your refrigerator, car windshield, bedroom ceiling, etc. And follow it. Sit down at your computer (or your notebook) once a day and write out a single line. Write more if you want to, or stop there, but write that one line, just a sentence or two, each day. It doesn't matter whether you're sick, on vacation, writing your senior thesis the night before it's due. One line won't take up much of your time.

So, once you've gotten into the habit of writing that little bit every day–neither rain nor snow nor sleet nor slush can stop you–you'll be much more inclined to write more: a few lines, a paragraph, a few pages, a chapter, or an entire short story. Or, as I said, you can stop with a line.

Now, go back to what you typed earlier. There it is. You've written some fiction. Write a little more. Wait until tomorrow if you want, but continue that story you started. Repeat until it's finished. Or maybe you don't like the start you got off to, and you'd rather start over. That's fine but remember, your new routine won't do you any good if you never finish anything. Those six figure advances and five cents per word payments don't get thrown out for unfinished work, unless you're J. K. Rowling or Robert Jordan. If you're one of those authors, you don't really need to read an article telling you how to start writing, do you?

Once you've finished your first story, send it out to a few readers–close friends and family who won't think worse of you for filling their inbox with your junk, but who will also be able to give you a fairly honest critique. Then, edit. "You don't know everything" is another maxim you could put on your bedroom ceiling. You can disagree with your readers, but if ten people tell you that your story lacks something, odds are they're right. Be humble enough to accept advice and

use it if you think it would make the story better after an honest appraisal.

Then, send it out. Don't tinker with it endlessly, adding adjectives only to take them out the next day. Look up some guidelines, buy some manuscript envelopes, and send it out to a magazine where it will fit. When in doubt, let the editor decide whether it's right for his publication, but don't send your 'Sword & Sorcery' piece to a literary journal. Also, don't insist on Analog, Fantasy & Science Fiction, Realms of Fantasy, or another professional publication. Don't even insist on being printed on paper, or being paid. You're just getting started–the pros will come later, and for now non-paying or marginally paying, amateur publications will help get your name out there.

Once you've sent the story off, don't wait until it comes back. Write something else. Start that novel you've had in the back of your head for years, or just write another short story, one line at a time if you have to.

If the submission gets accepted, celebrate! But if it's rejected, the far more likely outcome, don't let it discourage you. That's only your first piece. The next one will be better, and your skills will improve. Editors are people, too; they have their own tastes, and sometimes they just have a bad day when nothing seems any good. Send the story off to another editor, and repeat the process until it's accepted. While you're doing that (you know what I'm going to remind you of, don't you?), keep writing and keep submitting. It'll get easier as you go, and you'll find yourself able to make the time you need to keep up with your new hobby (or budding career, whichever you prefer). Outlines can be helpful for longer projects, and I'd advise that you always know the ending of your story before you start writing, or at least have some idea of what it's going to be.

Of course, after you've tried writing just a few sentences a day and find yourself hating even that, it could be that you're just not cut out to write fiction. If so, don't worry. It's not for everyone, and that doesn't mean you can't find some other way to get your ideas out there that you enjoy more. Perhaps you'll discover that you've got a hidden talent for painting, or you're a born comic book artist who just needs a good writer to become the next comic phenomenon.

But all that's getting ahead. For now, pin up those "Nulla dia sine linea" or "Never a day without a line" sheets. Follow that, and keep on following it, and you shouldn't have any trouble launching your writing career. See you on the bestseller lists.

# The End

# Jacob and the Dragon Wyrm

## By Arlene Cardoza

"Neil, Neil!!" Jacob ran around the corner of the house, then tripped on the rough flagstones in the courtyard, but saved himself from falling by grabbing the corner of his brother's work bench. Tools and reptile skin strips jumped. The tool Neil was using slipped sideways, making a deep gouge in the surface of the piece he was working on.

Neil jerked his hammer back in mid swing and turned to Jacob.

"You fool!" Neil snarled through gritted teeth. "You ruined it." He pushed the hammer against Jacob's heaving chest. "What are you doing here?"

Jacob grabbed the hammer to steady himself and gulped, trying to catch his breath. "But Neil. I found something. You've got to see."

Neil shoved him roughly away and turned back to the bench.

"Jacob, you clumsy diphead, go play somewhere else. I'm busy. Dad said for you to get the south corner of the garden weeded. You can't tell me you're done already." He squinted up at the sun then over his shoulder to Jacob.

"Where's your shirt?" Neil asked.

Jacob looked down at his dirt-smeared chest and back to his brother. "I'm trying to tell you. I found a Wyrm."

"A what?" Neil gave a snort of laughter. "There must be a million worms in the garden."

"No! Not a worm, a Wyrm. A Dragon Wyrm." Jacob nodded his head vigorously and waved his arms. "I fed it and helped it to a safe spot. And it's hurt. And it likes me. And…"

Neil raised his hand and covered Jacob's mouth, stopping the flow of words.

"Enough. Take your stories and games and get back out to the garden." Neil turned again to his work.

**Keeping back a bit, Karie looked the Wyrm over. It was about three feet long from tail tip to snout. Its back legs just strong enough to move it around, its front legs gripped gently on Jacob's arm.**

Jacob stood, his breathing still fast, tears of frustration running down his face.

"But…"

"I said GO! I have work to do!" His back was turned firmly to Jacob.

Jacob turned and stumbled out of the courtyard, his shoulder brushing roughly against the gatepost as he passed through.

He should have known Neil wouldn't listen. Ever since Neil turned seventeen last year and started working on the harnesses with Dad, he had treated Jacob like he was nothing but a pest. It didn't help that lately it seemed like all Jacob did was fall over his own feet. Dad had put him to weeding the garden as something he couldn't mess up with his clumsiness while Dad was in town doing business.

Rubbing his shoulder and looking out across the yard, he saw Karie swinging from the tall oak tree in her front yard. Her head was thrown back, her arms extended and her legs out straight, giving her the most lift possible. He knew she was imagining she was flying, riding the

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## Page Turners
### Deep Magic Looks at Books

Be sure to check out the Book Reviews website, which contains all current and past book reviews in an easily searchable format. It also allows you to leave your own review or feedback for a book. All you have to do is register on our message boards and you can tell others what you think of the books. We hope you enjoy it, and we'll see you there!

Deep Magic Book Reviews website

Editor's Choice: Fantasy

## Eragon
### By Christopher Paolini

Eragon lives with his uncle in the midst of the Spine mountains. A boy of fifteen, he has never known any life aside from that of farming and hunting in the wilderness, with the closest village hours away. Until, that is, he finds a mysterious blue stone from which hatches a brilliant blue dragon that bonds with him immediately. Eragon calls her Saphira and raises her in the woods with scraps of meat that he smuggles out to her until she is capable of hunting. But things quickly go awry. Two mysterious men enter the town, and when Eragon returns to his home he finds it in flames with his uncle mortally wounded beneath the wreckage. He sets off seeking justice against those who murdered his uncle, taking with him Saphira and a mysterious storyteller, Brom, who seems to know a great deal about dragons and history which has been nearly forgotten. Soon, Eragon finds himself swept up in the conflict that is rocking the land of Alagaesia—the war against Galbatorix, the sorcerer-king of the realm and the man responsible for eliminating the dragon riders who once kept peace in the land. During his quest, Eragon learns of Alagaeisa's troubled past, and learns to harness the magical power which belongs to all those who ride dragons.

*Eragon* is a young-adult fantasy novel with more than a million copies in print, an upcoming movie adaptation, and two sequels in the works. The franchise is quickly growing to almost Harry Potter-like proportions-and it perhaps deserves its place more than J. K. Rowling's work does. Paolini wrote it when he was fifteen, and with his parents' help he self-published it. The editor of Knopf read a copy and decided to publish it professionally, in hardcover. The author is now about twenty and is working on the sequel, which is scheduled for publication in 2005.

It is well (if not quite brilliantly) written and plotted, and although the title character is a little blank, his dragon Saphira more than makes up the difference. Through the telepathic link that she shares with Eragon, she reveals a personality that is both playful and fearsome. Other characters have complex pasts and interesting personalities that are revealed as the book progresses. Some of Paolini's descriptions are excellent, and the locales he creates are interesting and beautiful.

There are, however, a few problems. Eragon's world is put together with little sense of climate or natural science, leading to a massive, hot desert with chilly mountain valleys just a little to the south and chilly forests just a little to the north. Terrain features are essentially plunked down in interesting locations without any real rationale for it; not necessarily inexcusable in a fantasy novel, but I found it slightly irritating in *Eragon*. Also, it lacks a certain amount of originality: dwarves and elves that are little different from the generic ones of most fantasy. Although these races are presented lovingly and perhaps more clearly than usual, one wishes that Paolini was a little more creative in his world-building. The orc-like creatures (Urgals) are somewhat better, but still aren't that different from Tolkien's creatures. The plot also gets cut off fairly abruptly, and you'll have to wait for further books for the conclusion.

Still, there isn't anything wrong with a good rendition of classic themes, and *Eragon* is certainly that. The story is told lovingly and with an eye to detail, and despite the originality problem, Paolini portrays the main race involved in this book, the dwarves, better than many

continued on next page

other authors, who seem more enamored with elves. Overall, *Eragon* is a solid piece of fantasy with a likeable cast, particularly for young adults with little experience in the genre. I'm eagerly awaiting the sequel.

*Possible objectionable material: Combat violence, one scene where Eragon comes across the site of a massacre-not graphic*

*(Reviewed by Sean T.M. Stiennon)*

## Book Review: Fantasy
## The Spiderwick Chronicles
### By Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black

The Grace children are like many other children. Mallory, the oldest, is almost a teenager and likes to fence. She has two younger brothers, twins Simon and Jared. Simon is an animal lover, but the only thing Jared seems to distinguish himself by is his knack for getting into trouble. Their parents have recently divorced, and the three Grace children and their mother have just moved into the old family mansion formerly owned by batty Aunt Lucinda. The old Victorian wreck looks like it is being held up by an act of faith. However, Simon, Jared, and Mallory soon learn that it is even more interesting than it at first appears.

Upon first entering the house, Jared heard what he thought were squirrels in the walls. That night he hears it again, and he and Mallory go to explore. Startled, Mallory accidentally knocks a hole in the ancient wall, where he discovers a secret stash. Not sure whose loot they've uncovered, they try to track down the noise, and discover an old dumbwaiter. Using the dumbwaiter, Jared finds a secret library at the top of the mansion, belonging to old Arthur Spiderwick, Aunt Lucinda's father who one day mysteriously disappeared. The library contains many odd books about fairies and gnomes and trolls, as well as a piece of paper with a poem that Jared memorizes.

The next day, Jared explores some more, and using the cryptic clues of the poem, he discovers an old book that Arthur Spiderwick was writing, entitled *Arthur Spiderwick's Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You*. Like the other books in his library, it is about the fantastic creatures that are all around the old Spiderwick mansion.

This is just the beginning of the Grace children's adventures. The book that Jared discovered is wanted by many of the magical creatures, and they'll do anything to get it. Soon, Jared, Simon, and Mallory find themselves pulled into a magical world of intrigue and adventure with their very lives at stake.

*The Spiderwick Chronicles* is a serial novel, being published in five volumes. As of this writing, the fifth volume is yet to be published, but is scheduled for a Sept. 7 release. Each volume is slim, about 100 to 150 pages, hardcover, and about 7 by 5 inches. They are all lavishly illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi with nearly every page spread containing some illustration, many of them full-page.

The writing is superb, geared toward the 8-10 age group, but (as with all great books) older readers will not be bored at all by the story. Black and DiTerlizzi reveal their knowledge of mythical and fantastic lore in this tale rich with goblins and trolls and dwarfs and brownies. While there is also the almost requisite child-parent strife, the children are not presented as overly noble and the parents are not presented as overly dense and antagonistic. The character of Mrs. Grace, for example, is almost laudatory in her love for her children. Also, Aunt Lucinda is sympathetic to the children's plight and helps them with all the information she can provide. By not having the adults caricatured as dense and antagonistic, the writing allows the children's personalities to shine through. Even though each of the Grace children can be characterized with a single trait (Mallory fences, Simon loves animals, Jared is clever but has a temper), they still come alive off the page as they interact with one another.

It seems a fad right now in publishing, with the success of *The Series of Unfortunate Events*, to have multi-volume children's stories. Of the ones I've read so far, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* is by far the best.

*Possible objectionable material: none.*

*(Reviewed by Matthew Scott Winslow)*

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Book Review: Fantasy

## Runt the Brave

### By Daniel Schwabauer

Young JaRed is a mouse, a commoner in the great mouse city of Tira-Nor. His older brother is HaRed (also known as Horrid), one of the prestigious Kingsguard, but all JaRed is known for is being small and ineffectual, hence his nickname 'Runt.'

One day while out exploring, however, JaRed comes across a couple rat spies who are scouting out the lay of the land above the underground city of Tira-Nor. JaRed barely escapes and returns to Tira-Nor where he meets with the Seer mouse TaMir. Years before TaMir had crowned SoSheth as the first mouse king of Tira-Nor, but now he has come to declare that JaRed is to be the next king and anoints Runt for the task.

Through a series of fantastic events, JaRed eventually finds himself in the Kingsguard as the rats attack. Runt has made friends with the king's son, JoHanan, and together they form two-thirds of a triad of mice warriors who are among the first to encounter the attacking rats. The assault on Tira-Nor goes badly for the mice and their only hope is in finding a mouse warrior who will fight against the gigantic rat leader, GoRec.

To anyone even slightly familiar with the Biblical story, it should be obvious by now that this is a re-telling of the story of David and Goliath. JaRed is David, JoHannan is Jonathan, TaMir is Samuel, SoSheth is Saul, and GoRec is Goliath. While the story is overall entertaining and can easily keep a young reader who can handle a lengthy chapter book entertained, the story unfortunately creates too many parallels to the David and Goliath story without adding anything to it: the more discriminating reader will find himself asking why he is reading this story when the original is a much richer narrative. However, as I've already mentioned, I feel the book will hold up to the lesser demands of younger readers. The writing style is clear and crisp and the characters are succinctly drawn (although a slight bit caricatured). The story moves along at a brisk pace, only interrupted occasionally by the mythic back story of the mouse god, ElShua.

*Possible objectionable material: none.*

*(Reviewed by Matthew Scott Winslow)*

Book Review: Fantasy

## Magic Tree House Series

### By Mary Pope Osborne

The magic of going to the library as a child is the adventure one can find between the covers of a fantastic book. The more fantastic the story, the further a child's mind may travel and grow. That is literally what Mary Pope Osborne's Magic Tree House books are about.

Eight-year-old Jack and his seven-year-old sister, Annie, discover a tree house in the Frog Creek Woods near their home. Neither remembers seeing it there before. They soon realize the tree house, which has an impressive array of books on its shelves, is a magical vehicle to far-away lands and adventures. With a wish, Jack and Annie travel to the places they see in those very books. In the first book, Jack and Annie find themselves in a prehistoric world, surrounded by dinosaurs. In subsequent books, they travel to a medieval castle, ancient Egypt, a pirate ship, old Japan, an Amazon Jungle, an ice age and to a futuristic moon base. And that is in just the first eight books. Now, there are more than twenty. Along the way, they discover the tree house belongs to a magical librarian from the time of King Arthur named Morgan le Fay. A contemporary of the famous Merlin, she guides them on many of their adventures.

Jack and Annie seem realistic to this reviewer, as he has an eight-year-old son and a soon-to-be six-year-old daughter. Over the course of the series, the children seem to have grown, and their relationship with each other has strengthened. Perhaps that is because the have to rely

continued on next page

on each other so often in their many adventures. Yet, they still behave like brother and sister. Each brings certain strengths and weaknesses to the story, and the two compliment each other nicely. Jack is cautious and takes good notes. Annie is curious and brave. In the end, they always find their way home and seem ready to face whatever challenge awaits them the next time they climb the ladder into the Magic Tree House.

These delightful stories educate a child about different cultures, people, and places, while weaving one page-turning adventure after another. Osborne does her homework about each subject and place the children visit and adds interesting, colorful details that adults will also enjoy. Each book is approximately seventy pages long, and the series as a whole is broken into four book sets where each book in the set is tied together. Parents will enjoy reading these quick stories to children at the lower range of the age scale, and older children will improve their reading abilities as they turn the pages themselves. Another excellent option is to listen to the stories on audio book. The audio format has been well produced, and Osborne gives life to her characters by reading the story herself. I highly recommend checking out these books or the audio books from your library. If you have children in school, the books are available through the periodic scholastic and other book orders at very reasonable prices.

*Recommended ages: 6-12*

*Possible objectionable material: none*

*(Reviewed by Brendon Taylor)*

## Book Review: Fantasy
## Dealing with Dragons and the Enchanted Forest Chronicles
### By Patricia C. Wrede

*Dealing with Dragons* is the first installment of Wrede's four book series, "Enchanted Forest Chronicles," yet it stands alone as a complete story... a story chock full of princes, princesses, dragons, wizards, knights, and even a witch. Wrede has a great deal of fun with traditional notions of propriety for fairy tale characters.

With much tongue in cheek, Wrede telss the story of Princess Cimorene, who does not care for the things a princess is expected to care for. Rather than learning dance, drawing or etiquette, Cimorene is interested in fencing, magic, Latin, economics, juggling, and cooking. Her parents, the king and queen, after much frustration with her interest in these completely useless endeavors, arrange a marriage with a handsome prince. Cimorene has the audacity to object to the union simply because the prince is empty-headed and neither she nor the prince love each other. She then does what any proper princess would never think of doing: She runs away and risks being eaten to offer her services to a dragon. Fortunately for her, she ends up with a sensible female dragon, Kazul. In the dragons' caves, she meets other captive princess, a slew of would-be rescuing knights, and even some pesky wizards. She also finds happiness.

This story is a fast and fun read. Young teenagers would certainly enjoy the clever twist Wrede puts on traditional fairy tale fodder, much as they might enjoy *Shrek* for the same reasons. The one minor thing I did not enjoy about the first book is remedied in the subsequent installments of the "Enchanted Forest Chronicles," and that is a lack of strong, intelligent male characters. I found this tale intelligently written, and thought-provoking. Wrede challenges ideas and concepts that many might simply take for granted. The other books in the series each build on the imaginative world established by Wrede in *Talking to Dragons*. Each book adds new characters, furthers the original storyline, and expands the borders of the fantasy world while still mixing in many of the familiar and enjoyable elements from previous stories. The second book stands alone, but the third and fourth books are inseparable parts of the concluding story arc to the series. This series is definitely worth cracking.

*Possible objectionable material: none*

*(Reviewed by Brendon Taylor)*

continued on next page

Book Review: Science Fiction

## Pit Dragon Trilogy

### By Jane Yolen

These books are beautifully descriptive. Austar IV, the planet where these stories take place, is a completely original world full of interesting landscapes, and teeming with unusual plant and animal life.

Readers will empathize with Yolen's characters Jakkin and Akki as they make the shift from childhood to adulthood in a world that is still trying to come to terms with itself.

As is common in fantasy and science fiction writing, Yolen uses words she has created to refer to things in her world. This makes them more difficult to read. Although these are generally considered children's books, I would classify them as books for adolescents and young adults. In fact, I believe these books would be excellent for young adults who have difficulty reading. They are interesting, action-filled and well writtenÑsure to draw in a reluctant reader.

*Dragon's Blood:* Jakkin is an indentured servant on the planet Austar IV, caring for dragons. Austar IV, formerly a penal colony, has an economy centered on dragon fighting.

Jakkin wears a bag at his neck that when it is filled with enough money he can use to buy his freedom and become a master. At his current wages it will take forever to buy himself out of servitude, so he develops a plan to steal a dragon's egg, and raise the dragon to fight in the pits.

*Heart's Blood:* Jakkin's dragon, Heart's Blood, has just laid her first clutch of eggs, when Jakkin receives a message from Akki saying she needs his help. Though distrustful of the messenger, a senator named Golden, Jakkin agrees to help.

He goes to the Rokk as agreed, under the cover of bringing a dragon to fight in the pits, but is unable to connect with the man he was supposed to meet. Instead he finds the doctor whom Akki used to work for before she disappeared. Dr. Henkky warns Jakkin not to trust Golden. Jakkin must decide what to do, and how he can possibly help Akki.

*A Sending of Dragons:* Jakkin and Akki have been *changed*. They can see a greater range of color, can tolerate the cold of Dark After without shelter, and can speak with their minds to each other and the dragons. They have made their home in some caves in the mountains, but realize that they have been living too near to where they were last seen when a helicopter buzzes by their caves. Immediately, Jakkin and Akki gather some food and leave to find a new home.

The mountains are believed to be impossible to traverse and Jakkin and Akki soon find themselves at a dead end. With some help from one of the young dragons they discover a tunnel in the side of the mountain. A few feet inside they discover piles of dragons bones. As they turn to leave the tunnel, they hear the sound of a helicopter outside.

Now they must decide whether to face whoever is searching for them, or whatever lurks in the tunnel and eats dragon.

*Recommended ages 11-young adult*

*Possibly objectionable material: Some sexual content and violence. References are made to baggeries--a place where girls (called baggery-girls) work as prostitutes. It is described as a place where kisses are sold. While the descriptions are tactfully written, it is clear what a baggery is.*

*(Reviewed by Rochelle Buck)*

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ourselves this winter."

Safira held her ground. "We will find another way. The stone can only be used once. Suppose there comes a time when we are more desperate than this and we have already squandered the magic?"

With one last look at the box, Keir nodded in agreement, knowing it was no use arguing. They had had this conversation before, as Safira was quick to recall. "Remember when the barn burned? Or when your mother was sick? We thought of the stone then, too, but it was not necessary. And what about when Duran's boy was lost?" Keir had to admit she was right. He had wanted to use the stone before and she had been wise to make him wait.

In the end, after much deliberation, four of Keir's half dozen cattle were sold, the debts paid and supplies for the winter bought. It would make the next year more difficult, but they would make it thorough this winter at least. The small black stone still sat in its wooden box, waiting for the moment when it would truly be needed.

Safira was preparing the noon meal when she heard the shouts of men approaching the house. She rushed outside to find Bram and Dacre hurrying up the path carrying an unconscious Keir between them. His leg was wrapped crudely in Bram's shirt, but already the cloth was saturated with his blood.

Holding the door wide, Safira ushered the men inside, too horrified even to ask what had happened. They placed Keir carefully on the table. Bram explained to Safira that there had been an accident as they had been chopping firewood. Keir's ax had slipped and his leg was deeply cut. Ira had gone for the doctor, and Bram assured her they would arrive shortly.

By the time Keir opened his eyes, the doctor had gone, promising to return in the morning. Safira kissed Keir's forehead and plumped the pillow behind his head. He was lying in their bed, where he'd been moved as soon as the bleeding had stopped.

Keir grimaced and gave a weak smile. "How bad is it?" he asked.

"The doctor said you should remain in bed for a few weeks. He will be back tomorrow—you can talk to him yourself then."

Keir lay back against the pillow. Closing his eyes, he winced slightly, but not from the pain. Winter was coming and there was much to do. There was wood to be chopped, the barn needed mending, stores had to be set up for themselves and their few livestock… How could he be laid up for weeks?

The doctor came the next day and again the next. By the third day infection had set in. The doctor talked in a whisper to Safira about the possibility that Keir would lose the leg. But despite their hushed voices, Keir overheard their conversation. When the doctor had gone, he called Safira to him and said seriously, "I think we should try the stone."

"No." She shook her head. "You may still recover on your own. And what if something worse happens later when we truly need the stone?"

"Safira, I may never walk again," Keir pleaded. His grey eyes looked genuinely terrified.

Still she refused, insisting, "You will recover."

The doctor returned many more times. Eventually the infection was cured and Keir was able to walk again, but never without a limp and never without pain. He never complained, nor did he blame Safira, but always in the back of his mind, he wondered if he could have avoided this fate. He went about his work more slowly now and his days were longer as he struggled to keep up with the demands of his farm. But he was well again, if not entirely whole, and the

black wishstone was once more saved for a more dire need sometime in the unforeseen future.

That winter was a difficult one, long and cold. In combination with the harshness of the weather and Keir's recent injury, they were ill prepared for winter. Storms came, one after another, hardly giving Keir time to beg food and firewood from the neighbors before the next icy blizzard struck. A dispirited humbleness settled upon him as he resorted to charity to provide for himself and his wife.

Now Keir and Safira sat huddled together under every blanket and wrapping they owned before a low burning fire.

"We have no more wood," Keir said again, staring into the dying flames.

"The storm will break soon," Safira reassured him.

Keir sighed. "What if it does not? Safira, we *must* try the stone."

Safira was silent for a moment. For the first time since the stone had passed from her grandmother's hands into her own, she actually considered it. Even her calculating mind could see no other solution save a change in the weather. If the storm did not break, they would have no other choice. Of course the storm would break—it always had before. But in all practicality, she had to admit to herself the possibility that the storm would not end soon enough.

After a long pause, she shook her head. "No," she said slowly. "Not yet. We will wait a little longer. If the storm does not break soon…" she hesitated, and then forced herself to finish in a resolute rush, "we will use the stone."

Keir nodded in agreement, trying to pull the blankets closer. They sat shivering together until the last tiny ember had burned itself out. Still the storm howled at the door. "Now do we use the stone?" Keir asked through chattering teeth.

Safira shook her head with effort. "Not yet," she whispered. The weather would change soon; she could almost feel it. Closing her eyes, she listened for a change in the wind that would indicate that the storm was ending.

Keir felt his body convulsing with shivers. Safira, next to him, was shaking just as violently. "Now?" he asked.

"Wait," Safira insisted.

And so they waited in the unforgiving cold for the storm to break. Two days later, their bodies were found, stiff and frozen, clinging to one another under a pile of blankets. The bodies were removed and their house cleared. There was not much in the simple two-room home—some furniture, clothes, a few dishes and a small wooden box. The box was opened by the curious neighbors. Dust fell from the untouched lid as it was lifted, revealing a single black stone and a single unused wish.

# The End

*Amy M. Smith is a high school teacher. She lives with her husband and her cat and enjoys reading and writing. "One Single Wish" is her first published work.*

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threshold of the locked door, and she looked up and stared into my eyes.

I should mention here that the girl was not pretty. She had lank, greasy hair of an indeterminate shade; she had a slight squint, and her skin was pock-marked. As I have mentioned, I was no beauty myself at that point, having been cursed by ten generations of kings.

But she looked at me. She saw me. She knew what I was.

"Oh, lubberkin," she said, and her low voice made it almost a prayer.

"What is the matter, O Daughter of Eve?" I asked, speaking politely. We folk of Faerie are often warned not to anger mortals, for even the kindest may turn capricious and cruel.

"My father," she said, rubbing at her dull brown eyes, "has boasted to all and sundry that I can spin straw into gold. And the king has heard of this and has commanded me to spin all the straw in this room into gold in one night. If I succeed, I shall go free. If not...he will burn me at the stake as a witch." And she burst into loud, noisy crying like the bawling of a cow.

Well and well, I have ever had a soft spot for mortals. If I did not, I would not have lasted long as a lubberkin, would I?

"It is not so hard to spin straw into gold," I said in my most comforting voice. "What will you give me, if I agree to spin it for you?"

I see you think me selfish for asking for something in exchange. But such is the way of things between mortals and Faerie folk. Mortals will take and take and take forever—we learned that early on. Nowadays we try to teach them that you get what you give.

The girl snuffled, and blew her nose on her skirt. I struggled not to turn away in disgust.

"My ring," she said, and she pulled a ring of ashwood from her finger and handed it to me.

I licked the ring, and knew that it had been a name-day gift from her father and her mother, now dead. I knew, too, that the loss of this gift would sorely pain her father, who had spent much time and love carving it.

For a moment, I felt a bit uneasy about the girl. But then she looked at me pleadingly, and I forced the uneasiness to the back of my mind.

"Very well," I said. I snapped my fingers, and a spinning wheel of solid oak appeared. I picked up a handful of straw, and I began to spin.

And spin.

And spin.

And as I spun, the straw became skeins of purest gold.

Of course, I knew that the gold would last but a day and a night, but I counted it no cost. The girl would be gone ere the gold turned back into straw again.

Or so I thought.

As I learned the next day, the king was astounded—and not too pleased—that the girl had succeeded. He felt that he had been made a fool of by the miller, the girl, and whichever of his courtiers had helped her. There was a great deal of thunderous shouting, and more than one noble, seeing the wrath of the king, found sudden and urgent business in the kingdom's outlying territories.

This, of course, only made the king more wroth. He bullied the servants, bellowed at his courtiers and berated his advisers, giving none any peace. Finally, someone suggested that the king test the girl again.

Why it was even necessary for someone to suggest this, I do not know. Perhaps the king feared publicly breaking his word, for he liked to present himself to the world in the guise of a paladin, valiant and pure. Perhaps he felt that demanding more than he had bargained for was greedy and selfish, and would bring ill luck.

At any rate, the king ordered the stable boys to fill the entire armory from floor to ceiling with bale after bale of straw, leaving only room for one person to sit or stand. Then, just as the sun was setting, the guards led the miller's daughter into the straw-filled room.

The king spoke bluntly to her. Spin all the straw in the room into gold by dawn, and she would go free. Fail, and her life would be forfeit. So saying, he swept from the room, and the girl collapsed to the floor, sobbing incoherently.

She did not sob prettily. Silver tears did not streak her cheeks, nor did a single pearl-like drop fall from one eye. No, she howled uncontrollably, her eyes reddening and her nose swelling.

It was dangerous to get involved with humans, I reminded myself. Humans tended to claim what they saw as theirs by right, and many and many a one of the Faerie folk had been caught in their toils and ensnared forever.

But...I am a lubberkin. A house-servant. How could I not help a human? Especially this one, who had seen me, known me for what I was and begged for my help but a day before.

I materialized.

"Lubberkin!" she cried joyously, her tears drying in an instant. "Thank God that you've arrived!"

"Why are you weeping, maiden?" I asked politely, wincing away from the searing blaze of the blessing. It was well meant, I told myself. She did not know that blessing me would cause me pain.

"The king has commanded me to spin all this"—she gestured at the straw filling the room—"into gold by sunrise. If I succeed, he swears that this time I truly shall go free...but if I fail, he shall have me burned alive."

And she covered her face with her hands and wept noisily again. I thought that she might merely be making the right sounds to gain my sympathy, as I saw her peeking through her fingers to watch my reaction.

Still, one more night of spinning was no great effort.

"What will you give me, if I agree to spin it for you?" I asked gently.

"This," she said. She pulled a necklace—part pendant, part amulet, I would have said—over her head and handed it to me.

The necklace was a cheap thing, probably purchased at a fair. It was gaudy, glittering, gilded tin painted with many meaningless symbols someone thought artistic and a very few symbols granting luck and protection.

I tasted it. It had been given to her by a simple but good-hearted young man who found her kind and fair. He had worked long hours and hungered and thirsted as well, to save the coppers needed to buy this tawdry trinket in order to gift her with what he thought would be a lifetime of good fortune.

I misliked the fact that she could cast aside a token of love and luck so easily. But then, her life was at stake, and perhaps that was explanation enough.

I snapped my fingers, and once again, a spinning wheel of solid oak appeared. And once more, I began to spin.

By morning, I was done, and the room was stacked from floor to ceiling with skeins of purest gold.

If the king was angered after the first spinning, he was awestruck at the second. He did not, of course, keep his word and free the girl. No, he had visions of becoming richer than Midas and Croesus combined. He commanded that the Grand Ballroom be filled from end to end and from ceiling to floor with bales of straw. If the miller's daughter could spin this into gold, he said,

swearing a mighty oath before his whole court, then the girl would be his queen. For a maid who could perform such wonders would ensure that the treasury would never run dry in time of drought or flood, war or famine.

He did not seem to be aware that the skeins from the first spinning had faded, leaving naught but bundles of straw where the spun gold had been.

That night, when I came to the Grand Ballroom to see how she was faring, the miller's daughter was already waiting for me.

"Lubberkin!" she cried at the sight of me. "Where have you been? Help me, I beg you—there is such a lot of gold to spin tonight."

"Indeed," I agreed. "But your life is not in danger this time."

"No," she said, "but my happiness is."

"Happiness!" I said incredulously. "You expect to be happy with a king who shows his love by threatening to kill you twice? No joy will you have of this man. I will spin for you, if you will sacrifice this wild dream, and return to your village and your own folk."

This did not sit well at all. The miller's daughter was determined to wed the king—no matter that she loved him not, nor he her—and insisted that I aid her. *Aid* her. As if I had not done all of the work already!

"What will you give me, if I will spin for you one last time?" I asked.

"I-I have nothing left to give," she said.

Now, this was not true. She could have parted with a memory, or a song, or the color of her hair. She could have pledged to bake me a loaf of bread daily from the flour her father ground. She could have promised to praise me, the luck of the house, when she was queen and dwelt in the castle. All simple things, and they would have cost her little.

But she did not wish to sacrifice bits of her life or fragments of her time. No, she wanted me paid and gone, like an ill-natured peddler who may cast the evil eye if he stays in a village too long.

"Then our bargain is ended," I told her, frowning. "If you have nought to give me, then I have no time for you." So saying, I turned away.

I was halfway through the door when the miller's daughter cried out. "Lubberkin! Wait! I've thought of something I could give you."

"And what is that?" I said.

Her answer shocked me. "My firstborn child."

I turned about and stared at her. "You. Are. Mad," I said, biting off each word clearly. "What would I do with a child?"

Oh, I'll admit it. Elves have a tendency to steal babes—not to mention small children, young men and maids in love, and musicians. But all of the folk of Faerie do not fancy stealing children...and even those that do steal them do not buy infants from their parents. Purchasing humans—or accepting them in exchange for a bargain—is most unlucky, not to mention unwise.

And where could I take a babe? I am a lubberkin, a servant of the house and of its owners. It takes much to force my kind from our place. The babe would have to remain with me, in the castle, even if I wished to keep it...and then she would tell her royal husband that an evil spirit had stolen their son and heir. I would be cast out, bloody and battered by bell and blessed word and twisted taper, if I were not exorcised into oblivion. Either way, I would be gone and silenced, and the king would never know that the spinner of gold had not been his wife.

As easily and subtly as this, she planned to rid herself of me for good and all. I, who had saved her life twice over.

We argued long into the night. She was determined that I would accept her as-yet-unborn child as payment; and I, of course, refused. Conscienceless and soulless we Faerie folk may be, but we are not stupid.

In the end, I wearied of her and her selfishness and greed. I told her I would accept payment later, and spun every straw in the Grand Ballroom into gold thread. She smiled and laughed then, for she thought she had gotten her way...though I had not mentioned what payment I would demand.

The king was elated the next day when he found the Grand Ballroom filled with skeins of gold. He was a bit less elated when his courtiers reminded him of his oath to wed the girl, but he came around quickly enough at the thought of wedding so rich and gifted a woman. And if she was homely and common...well, so were many maids and matrons who were of bluer blood than the miller's daughter.

There was a wedding.

The king and the miller's daughter seemed happy.

And a year later, a babe was born. A boy.

I peeked at the babe in his cradle, of course. Many times. I had to be certain that the young queen would see me, and at last she did.

Ah, the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Oh, it would be such a tragedy if she were forced to part from her beloved son—never mind that another woman fed him and a second changed him and a third sang him to sleep at night. No matter that she saw the child perhaps once a moon, if that.

She begged for a chance to get her child back. Which was rather ridiculous, as I hadn't taken him, nor did I intend to.

But I played along. "What sort of chance?" I asked.

She did not hesitate for an instant. "The riddle game," she said. "Grant me but three days, and if I can tell you your name in three guesses or less, you give over all claim to my son."

*Aye*, I thought, *and if you can tell me my name, I relinquish all claim to freedom while you live. You could command me to steal the child, and I would have no hope but to do as ordered. And by twilight, I would be dust, or worse than dust.*

It was an effort and cost me sore, but still I smiled at her, openly and innocently. "That," I told her, "will be satisfactory."

She made a good show of anxiety, of trying to solve an insoluble riddle. She called on every priest and priestess, gave orders that names be copied from moss-shrouded, crumbling headstones, and commanded that birth and death records be ransacked for the very strangest and most mysterious of names.

It was all laughable. Few of the Faerie folk have names that mortals can remember, let alone pronounce. From the beginning, I had sensed her unspoken hope that I would take pity on her...or betray myself through overconfidence.

Never let it be said that I do not oblige a lady.

As her search began, I gave myself permission to leave the castle and its grounds. It was no easy task; my blood caught fire and my bones splintered with cold as I did so. Normally, we lubberkins do not leave the houses of our owners until the last owner dies, or until the house itself dies. But it would be my death if I did not.

I made my way to various fountains, glades and forest clearings. For three days, I danced (though my bones screamed) and sang Summoning Spells (though my tongue tasted of dust and ashes), followed by a very bad jingle that I hoped would be simple enough and obvious enough

even for a passing mortal:

*"Today I'll brew, tomorrow I'll bake*
*And then the young queen's child I'll take.*
*Ho, ho, she'll lose the guessing game,*
*For Rumplestiltskin is my name."*

As I paused for breath between dances, I asked the crows and rooks if anyone had heard my song. Soon I learned that someone had—a young huntsman with more nobility than good sense who had made straight for the palace with the wondrous news about my name.

I laughed loud and long as I hastened back to the palace. Like fire and ice are "Rumplestiltskin" and my true name. But no matter, so long as the young queen believed it.

Garbed in cloth-of-gold, the queen was waiting for me in the Great Hall, along with the king and half of her court. All eyes were upon me as I boldly walked through the black cypress entryway. It was a long and painful journey from the door to the royal thrones; muttered curses and fearful prayers buffeted me. It would have been easier if I had materialized seemingly from the air, but I dared not do that. Not yet.

Finally, I stood before the young queen. I bowed mockingly. "Are you ready to conclude our business, Your Majesty?"

She glared at me, and fired three questions more swiftly than a longbowman:

"Is your name John?"

"No."

"Is your name Henry?"

"No."

"Is your name Rumplestiltskin?"

I flung myself to the floor and cursed and swore, writhing as if I were in the most horrific anguish. "Some demon has told you that!" I shrieked, seemingly convulsing in agony. "Some demon has told you that!" And I shuddered, squirmed one last time, gave a piercing howl, then vanished.

Or seemed to vanish. Actually, I had done no more than turn invisible.

And now, I judged, it was time for the queen to pay what was owed.

Swift as a wave, swifter than a wind that moves that wave, swifter than thought itself, I began to spin.

But not straw into gold. Not this time. Oh, no.

As the king took the queen in his arms, praising her wit and valor in battling an evil spirit, I spun the skein of their gold-based marriage, altering it till it was as brittle and flammable as straw.

As I spun, comprehension of the queen's greed and selfishness dawned in the king's eyes.

Memories of the king's lies, broken oaths and threats to slay her on little more than a whim kindled in the queen's expression.

A moment later, and the skein was spun. They were joined for life—a long and healthy life—and never would they part, for each knew far too much about the other. Neither would ever trust the other again. Even the illusion of love would be denied them.

It would be a joyless marriage and a joyless reign. The queen had wished me to depart from castle and king, and I saw no reason to deny her this.

But she should have remembered...it is ill done to try to trick the Faerie folk. Now all the

luck of the king's family, and of the land itself, would go with me. And it would never return, not while I lived.

For I was—and am—a lubberkin.

I am the luck of the owners of the house.

# The End

*Tracey Pennington lives near a Connecticut wood populated by deer, coyotes and a thing without a name. Her heart resides alternately at Oxford University and in the Scottish Highlands. Having given up her paralegal career to write full time, she enjoys debating and reading historical fantasy, Irish poetry and Pratchett.*

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funny."

Bouncer hopped over to touch noses in welcome too. He was gray and fluffy with a white cotton tail and long floppy ears. His nose wiggled as he giggled, "Let's play 'hide-and-go-seek'. Soon Ki-Yi will come. We'll dry off our fur while we romp in the sun."

The rain had stopped. From the sweet-smelling air above, two crows, Inky and Dinky flew down to them. They sang and joked in squawky voices, danced about, then cawed, "Ki Yi has a covered basket in his teeth. Surely there's something tasty underneath."

After the animal pals shared the goodies that Ki Yi brought, they asked how he found them. He grinned as he answered Rascal and Spitfire. "Two picnickers ran away from the rain. They dropped their basket right there in the lane."

"In the basket I felt a big ball of yarn. We had nothing that nice back home in the barn," said Spitfire, yawning and purring, her tummy full, too tired to play anymore. "Grace, sing a lullaby, oh please. We'll curl up here beneath the trees."

Grace sang for them. "Now all sleepy heads must find their beds, while Hoot Owl rests way up in his nest. The bright moon is so high. See the stars in the sky." Softly, as the song ended, and tired eyes closed, Grace gave all her furry friends goodnight kisses. Inky and Dinky flew to a branch above and tucked their heads under their wings. Rascal and Spitfire slept peacefully, safe in their new home.

# The End

*A.M. Stickel lives in "Flower Land" near the Runsok, 3 miles below Deep End, contributes to DEEP MAGIC, NFG (Toronto print magazine), John Amen's PEDESTAL, Colin Harvey's SHOWCASE, and Andy Robertson's NIGHT LANDS. The writer's magic works include stories, poetry, and painting.*

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back of a Great Dragon.

He looked back toward the courtyard then ran across to Karie. Neil wouldn't care, he thought, as long as he wasn't in his way.

"Karie," he called as she swung past him.

The swing carried her far up into the branches, then back down to swing past him again.

"I found a Dragon Wyrm," he called as she swung past again.

"In the field the other side of the garden."

"It's hurt; you've got to help me."

Karie pulled herself upright and looked at him as she passed. Dragging her feet, she brought the swing to a halt.

"You're serious, aren't you?" She looked at his scratched, dirty chest and the tear streaks on his face.

"Show me."

Karie walked with him, her small compact body balanced and controlled, as he led her through the yard behind his house, and across the large garden to the high grass at the forest edge. There in a nest of grass, curled into a ball, was the baby dragon.

Jacob flopped down beside the Wyrm and gently stroked its head. Karie looked around at the empty pastures that surrounded them. The only things that broke the view for miles were the two homes on either side of the dirt road, the trees growing along the garden, and the river behind it.

Karie knelt beside Jacob and the Wyrm. As she reached forward, the Wyrm lifted its head and let out a soft hiss.

"It's scared," he said. "And hurt." He indicated a large dark area on its side.

Keeping back a bit, Karie looked the Wyrm over. It was about three feet long from tail tip to snout. Its back legs just strong enough to move it around, its front legs gripped gently on Jacob's arm. Its wings had not yet sprouted from beneath soft lumps on its shoulders. Except for the discolored area, it looked healthy. Jacob reached for some weeds he had piled to one side and handed them to Karie.

"Here, give him the roots. He likes them."

Karie extended the roots and, after some sniffing, the Wyrm began munching happily.

"Where could he have come from?" Karie said. "The nearest Dragon nests are in the City, miles away."

"I know," Jacob said. "I've been thinking. I bet he was stolen and he escaped."

"That's silly. There aren't any nests with babies right now." Karie shook her head in confusion. "I know. There haven't been any new babies for two seasons."

Jacob frowned. He knew Karie was right. Though only a year older than him, she would know. Her father took her to the city stables regularly to get training. Next year, when she turned fourteen, she'd be joining the Flying Academy.

But that only made it more curious. Where could this baby have come from?

"You know, he's pretty young. He couldn't have traveled far by himself," Karie said. "Where exactly did you find him?"

"The other side of the trees, in the grass above the river bank. I helped him move over here, but he's tired. I couldn't get him to move any more."

Karie was walking in the direction he pointed before he could get to his feet. They followed the trail of flattened grass back to the edge of the river bank. There they could see where the trail continued its way, down the dirt slope and through a line of bushes. Pushing their way

through, they came to the edge of the water where trees and rocks lined the shore.

Jammed up against the rocks and tangled in branches that hung over the water was a small, flat-bottomed boat.

"There must have been somebody with him," Karie said. "Why would he leave the baby?"

"Why come up this river? It's the wrong time of year to use the river. Too dry and shallow," Jacob said. "Maybe they hit some rocks and got thrown out."

He splashed into the water to look on the far side of the boat.

"Careful," Karie said just as Jacob's foot slipped off a rock and he fell to his knees, the cold water pushing up against him.

Grabbing the back of the boat to pull himself up, Jacob stopped suddenly. From his vantage point he could make out a man lying among the rocks on the other bank.

"Karie, look. Over there. That must be who had the Wyrm."

Karie shielded her eyes from the sun and squinted.

"He looks big, Jacob. I don't see how we can help him."

"I'll go see if I can get him further out of the water. You get help."

"But Jacob…"

Jacob knew what she was thinking. Clumsy Jacob, who tripped over his own feet, how was he supposed to do anything?

"Just go, Karie. You're much faster than me, and they'll believe you." Karie still hesitated. He let out a loud sigh of frustration. "Trust me, I won't do anything stupid. I'm just going to make sure his head is out of the water."

"What if he's dead?" Karie asked, suddenly nervous.

Jacob gulped and looked across at the man again.

"Then, I'll come back to this side and wait by the Wyrm."

Karie nodded and ran back the way they had come.

Jacob took a deep breath and headed across the river. The water was shallow, but the current was fast. As he moved across in a crab-like crawl, he wondered how the stranger had chosen this river to travel on. And why bring a baby dragon over water? Pushing from one rock to the next with both hands and feet, occasionally getting bumped against them, he carefully made his way across. He ended up a little downstream from the man and scrambled back to him.

The man's face was half in the water, his mouth just above the surface. Hearing his breath come in gurgling gasps, Jaob lifted the man's head further out of the river. Levering his arms under the man's shoulders he pulled hard and managed to roll him over on his back.

The man was large and his clothes heavy with water. The gravel and small rocks kept slipping out from under Jacob's feet as he tried to brace himself to pull the man further out of the river. His hands and knees were scraped raw when he stopped, gasping for breath and holding his arms under the man's head to keep it out of the water. Realizing his arms could not hold him long, Jacob slid down into the water and rocked him side to side until he had his legs underneath him and was cradling the man's head in his lap.

Sitting there waiting for Karie to return, he realized how cold the water was. Minutes ticked by. It seemed like forever since he had found the Wyrm while he was taking a break from the heat of the day and the boring task of weeding the garden.

When he felt he couldn't take the cold any longer, Karie came down the far bank. Close behind her was the large, square figure of Borans, the old farm hand that helped on her farm.

"We're coming, Jacob," Karie called and waved.

Borans shook his head as he looked the boat over. He took a rope from over his shoulder,

and tied one end to the front of the boat and the other end to a young sapling at the edge of the water. Jacob watched as with surprising strength the old man pulled the boat off the rocks.

Using a short, flat board as a paddle, Borans crossed the river.

"What you got there, little lad." Borans pulled the boat up against the rocks near Jacob.

Jumping into the water next to Jacob, Borans lifted the man's head and shoulders off Jacob's lap. The sudden cold rush of water on his legs where the man had lain sent Jacob into a fit of shivers.

"Hhhheessss sstilll bbbreathing," Jacob managed to stammer.

"That's good ,boy. You done good. Now you just get up in that boat and we'll see if we can't get everyone home."

Jacob nodded and fell more than climbed into the boat, the cold muscles of his arms and legs feeling almost useless. Behind him he heard a squishy thump and the boat gave a violent shake as Borans heaved the man into it.

He watched Borans pull them across with the rope, the muscles in his arms bulging. He looked down at his own long bony arms, sharp elbows and over-sized hands. Would he ever be as strong?

"Who do you think he is?" Jacob asked.

Borans gave his shaggy head a shake. "Looks to be from the North. He's got a good bump on his head. Probably got tossed on the rocks."

On the bank, Karie had laid out a blanket with a rope tied to a lizard mount. Jacob eyed the blanket and for a moment wished he could wrap up in it. He sat on the edge of the boat to hold it still while Borans lifted the big Northman out. With a loud grunt, he lowered the man onto the blanket. Quickly, Karie wrapped the blanket round the man, and led the mount up over the bank and across the field to the Wyrm.

After helping pull the boat up so that the current wouldn't take it away, Jacob followed Borans. His legs felt stiff and weak. More than once he slipped climbing up the bank. Each time Borans held out an arm to steady him and help him back along the way.

"Sorry," Jacob mumbled.

Borans looked at him with narrowed eyes.

Jacob was relieved to see the Wyrm still curled up in the nest of grass, sleeping peacefully.

He let himself collapse beside it and stroked its head as he murmured, "Did you miss me, little fella?" The Wyrm nuzzled him gently and made a soft purring sound. "Did you see that?" He grinned up at the others. Karie jumped off the lizard mount and knelt down beside them.

"I don't understand why they were in the river," she said, looking up at Borans.

Boran nodded toward the Wyrm. "That. From the north."

Looking at the baby, Karie's eyes widened in sudden understanding.

"What?" Jacob looked from one to the other in confusion.

"The baby. There haven't been any for two seasons," Karie reminded him. "And hardly any for two before that." Karie reached out and stroked the baby Wyrm lovingly. "There's been talk that they've become too inbred. The young flyers wanted to bring in new blood from other cities. Even other countries." She looked up at Borans. "But a lot of the older riders didn't want to. Said it would make them look weak."

Borans nodded his head and breathed a sigh that blew out his cheeks. "And there are those in the city government that don't think we need the Dragon Fleet any more either. They feel too many taxes go to support the fleet."

"This young man must be trying to help sneak in a Northland Dragon."

Just then the stranger made a groaning noise and Karie jumped up to check him.

"We need to get him to the house and keep him safe. Can we put the Wyrm on the blanket with him and drag them both?"

Borans rubbed his hand on the back of his neck and eyed the blanket.

"I think we had better take him in first and come back for the Wyrm." He nodded his head at the baby dragon. "I'm afraid he's a bit heavier than you think. Would be too much on that poor blanket; it would tear for sure."

He crouched beside Jacob. "I think they'll be fine here till we get back." He tousled Jacob's hair. "You've got a good handle on things here. You've got some capable hands there, boy, and a good head on your shoulders. You did a good thing today."

Borans stood and led Karie and the lizard toward the houses.

Jacob sat and stroked the Wyrm. He felt a warm glow inside at the farmhand's words. Talking softly to the baby dragon, he said, "Someday, you will grow to be a Great Dragon and I will grow to be a great man." And for the first time he believed he really would.

# The End

*This is Arlene's first published fiction story. Although she has loved to write all her life, she never persued writing seriously until this past year when job downsizing caused her to re-evaluate how she earned her living. Taking a deep breath, she plunged in head-first to the freelancing pool. Within a short time she came up for air to discover she had become a full-time lead reporter for the leading county newspaper, a much more enjoyable job than sitting in a back room doing data entry.*

*She has submitted several children's short stories to various magazines and e-zines, and she hopes to someday have books published in both young adult Sci-fi/Fantasy and the Action/Adventure genres. Arlene is the mother of eight, grandmother of three, and lives in the 'real' Northern California just below the Oregon border. She camps, hikes, coaches and refs soccer and loves to garden and knit.*

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